

BELITTling A BIG THING.

There is a curious disposition shown by persons who speak on matters of art with an air of authority to belittle the Bartholdi statue as a work of art. They seem to forget that the foot rule used in the criticism of ordinary sculpture must be laid aside when a colossus appears on the horizon. Every new work of art is in some sense an experiment; particularly is this the case when it belongs to a branch in which there are few prototypes upon which the timid critic can pin his faith and next to no contemporary piece of work with which it can be compared.

The Bartholdi giantess is an experiment, but a magnificent one. Its novelty alone ought to win for it a generous and respectful welcome from writers on art, and comparisons with the Germania, the St. Charles Borromeo, the Bavaria, and the Colossus of Rhodes may be left to those who want to display their learning, but have not at heart the true interests of the arts that transcend nationality. It may be conceded that M. BARTHOLDI is not the equal of MICHAEL ANGELO—that convenient club with which to extirpate rising merit in statuary—and yet his singular talents as a workman in a little tried field of the fine arts should not be denied. We are told that the “Liberty Enlightening the World” will be ugly when seen from behind. We are informed that the goddess is resting her weight on the wrong leg. An air of wisdom in the fine arts is cheaply won by pooh-poohing colossal art in general and echoing subserviently the jealous sneers of rival Atlantic cities. The fact remains, however, that the Liberty, in her conception, is a stroke of genius, and that as to her execution—none of her detractors pretend to know whether she will be beautiful or not. Furthermore, the gift of the statue is a compliment so extraordinary (and perhaps so undeserved) that it is certain to form one of the most notable facts in the history of the century; so that if the sculptor were an indifferent instead of a good artist, and the colossus an ignorant instead of a learned and accomplished work of art, it ought to meet with the heartiest welcome.

That it would have been so met is quite evident had there not been the complication arising from uncertainty at first whether it was meant for the Government, the State, or the city. The Government has given a site than which a better would be hard to find. The State has done nothing. Citizens of New-York have supplied half a million francs for the foundation and the lower courses of the pedestal. Each State of the Union should now vote a round sum to the fund and have its shield artistically engraved on the monument. Finally, the plan of a public subscription of \$1 from every patriotic citizen who has not yet contributed should be carried out with energy, and this stupendous gift of the great republic of Europe to that of America accepted with due ceremony. For the comfort of those who are afraid of gigantic statues it is safe to affirm that the Liberty will be the most beautiful as well as the most historically interesting point in the landscape of the lower Hudson.

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